

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**A CASE STUDY OF SINGAPORE'S  
COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY:**

**AN ANALYSIS USING THE TOOLS OF OPERATIONAL DESIGN**

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## PREFACE

Insurgencies are one of the most complicated conflicts in the world. The underlying cause is often insidious, silently spreading among the population of a country without the knowledge of the government. The insurgency could break out in the form of peaceful protests, like the 2011 Egyptian Revolution that toppled the Mubarak government, or sporadic fighting in the form of guerilla warfare like communists in Indochina and Malaya, or full-scale military conflict like the 2011 Libyan Rebellion. Governments have a tendency to rely on the military or security forces to suppress the insurgency. These include foreign governments who offer assistance to countries besieged by insurgents. Military actions often aggravate the population in the besieged country and the insurgents gain more supporters in the process. Military actions usually overshadow efforts to eliminate the pre-conditions of an insurgency, including strengthening the government's authority. Moreover, these efforts usually phase in during the later part of a counterinsurgency campaign. By then, military actions have already damaged the country's capacity for nation building and it does not have sufficient resources to rebuild its governing authority. Foreign nations are also not willing to stay fully committed in the long process of nation building. Minimizing the use of the military in a counterinsurgency, focusing on the non-kinetic actions of enhancing governing authority and nation building helps governments regain the trust and support of their population. Understanding these non-kinetic factors and addressing them removes the preconditions for insurgencies and helps prevent future insurgencies. This research paper presents a case study of Singapore's pragmatic and non-ideological approach to counterinsurgency and aims to enable the reader to understand the non-kinetic factors in counterinsurgency operations.

## **ABSTRACT**

The Chinese Communist Party arrived in Singapore in 1925 to spread the communist movement in the region. They formed the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and gathered supporters among the Chinese immigrants in the region. Beginning in 1948, the MCP waged a guerilla war in the jungles of Malaya against the British colonial government. In Singapore, the MCP could not conduct guerilla warfare because of the urban environment, but began a powerful subversive campaign to topple the government of Singapore. The Chinese immigrants in Singapore, who were a majority of the population and were not integrated into the local colonial society, still identified with China and were easily swayed by the communist cause, ideals and values. Moreover, the defeat by the Japanese during the Second World War, the post-war disarray and the decreasing influence of the British in the Southeast Asian region damaged the local population's perception of the British colonial government. As the British transitioned Singapore toward self-governance and eventually independence, the MCP became politically active and their support was increasing. The MCP incited numerous strikes, riots and protests to create an environment of instability and challenged the government's ability to provide security. Police actions were often met by popular uproar. The conditions were favorable for the MCP to be democratically elected into office, seize power and form a communist government.

The government of Singapore, led by a new generation of English-educated locals who believed in democratic socialism, began an aggressive but non-kinetic campaign against the MCP. They initially allied with and used the MCP to tap into the Chinese population for support, then focused on nation building to prove the Singapore government's credibility. They brought tangible economic progress to the country and social progress to the population through

nation building efforts. The government was also very aggressive in information operations. They used the media and conducted public speeches to emphasize the achievements of the government. With the population conditioned to economic and social progress, the government exposed the MCP's efforts to disrupt the economy and stability of Singapore. The MCP lost its grip on the population and the government was able to neutralize the insurgency.

An analysis of Singapore's counterinsurgency identified the *Communist Cause* as the MCP's strategic center of gravity. *Effective Governance* was identified as Singapore's strategic center of gravity. Critical factor analysis of these two centers of gravity identified *Security, Rule of Law, Economy, Corruption, Integration and Perception* as the decisive points in Singapore's counterinsurgency operations. This paper then elaborated on the ways the government of Singapore controlled these decisive points, related them to the associated critical vulnerabilities identified in the critical factor analysis, and showed how the effects led to the neutralization of the MCP.

These decisive points were also the essential elements of nation building. By building a nation with economic and social progress, and at the same time neutralizing the MCP's disruptive efforts, Singapore was able to regain the support of its population. In the case of Singapore, nation building was an effective strategy for counterinsurgency.

## INTRODUCTION

*With good intelligence, counterinsurgents are like surgeons cutting out cancerous tissues while keeping other vital organs intact.<sup>1</sup>*

Army Field Manual 3-24

Ironically, this analogy failed to realize that the “intact vital organs” are almost always diseased in an insurgency. Merely keeping the vital organs intact is often not enough; they have to be healed and allowed to function without being rejected by the body’s immune system. Dr Jeffrey Reilly’s five decisive points in counterinsurgency operations; *local security, reintegration, rule of law, corruption and sanctuary*, give an overall impression of a non-kinetic focus on operations aimed at “healing” a nation besieged by insurgents.<sup>2</sup> In a fight between insurgents and counterinsurgents where they “battle for the population,” Reilly’s five decisive points focus on creating an environment where the population accepts the incumbent national authorities, forces out the insurgents, cuts off support to the insurgents and builds immunity against further subversion by the insurgents.<sup>3</sup>

The medical analogy from FM 3-24 contrasted with Reilly’s non-kinetic and “healing” decisive points is similar to the contrast between Western and Chinese medicine. This similarity was drawn from personal experience, being a patient of both kinds of treatment, in multi-cultural Singapore. Comparatively, Western medicine is more invasive and tends to focus on the symptoms of a sickness. For example, a cold is treated using a cocktail of drugs like cough suppressants, decongestants and lozenges. Undesired side effects are then addressed with the addition of more ingredients, like caffeine to reduce drowsiness. While these Western medicines provided almost immediate relief, the symptoms tend to resurface after the drug effects from each dose wore off. Chinese medicine, while unappealing in both taste and looks due to the

exotic herbs, dried bugs and dried reptiles in the concoction, targets the strengthening of the lungs, spleen and other vital organs by improving circulation, saliva producing function and vital organ function. While there are no immediate effects, the symptoms subside as the strengthened body fights off the sickness and repels other infections in the near term. Reilly's counterinsurgency decisive points took an approach similar to the philosophy of Chinese medicine by strengthening the system , letting the system force the insurgents out and building barriers against further subversion.

While many past counterinsurgency campaigns have been well-studied by schools for professional military education, the focus was on insurgencies involving military action. These campaigns have progressed into what Galula termed “hot revolutionary war.”<sup>4</sup> Although the underlying insurgent cause and the political conditions were studied in most cases, most of the analyses were on the employment of military forces for counterinsurgency operations. Using Reilly’s five decisive points for counterinsurgency, traditional military strengths can contribute to *security* and partly to *sanctuary*. Although the military can contribute to the other three decisive points, it is not their niche capability. As the US is shifting to a “whole-of-government” approach to counterinsurgency, with the desire for civilian agencies in the lead, the military is still often expected to lead because of its resources and deployability.<sup>5</sup> This behooves a better understanding of the non-military aspects of counterinsurgency operations.

Galula observed that a “revolutionary war is 20 percent military action and 80 percent political.”<sup>6</sup> Focusing on using the military for counterinsurgency creates an asymmetry because the counterinsurgents are only fighting 20 percent of the revolutionary war while the insurgents have the upper hand in the other 80 percent, which is political. In addition, military action can remove the symptoms but is not self-sustaining because the underlying preconditions for a

successful insurgency were not removed. A whole-of-government approach is more appropriate in order to cover the political aspects. The contributions of other non-military government agencies are arguably even more important than the military contribution in a counterinsurgency campaign, not only in proportion but in terms of sustainability. In Foreign Internal Defense, a self-sustaining and stable host nation meant a quicker transfer of authority back to the host government.

Reilly's approach to counterinsurgency, Galula's observation on revolutionary war being 80 percent political, and the increasing importance of studying the non-military aspects of counterinsurgency brought to mind a less well-known, closer to home, campaign against communist insurgents where military actions were absent. Occurring around the same period as the Malayan Emergency where the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) conducted guerrilla warfare against the British and Malayan governments in the jungles of Malaya, Singapore's own struggle against the MCP was a non-military campaign and was won through political and other non-kinetic operations. Singapore's struggle against the MCP insurgents is not commonly known as counterinsurgency operations. However, the communist insurgent activities against the British colonial and Singapore governments resembled what Galula defined as the "cold revolutionary war" phase, characterized by legal and non-violent insurgent activities.<sup>7</sup>

Despite not conducting kinetic operations, which may also be the reason this campaign is not well-studied among military professionals, Singapore's fight against the subversive activities of the MCP is classified as counterinsurgency operations according to both JP 3-24 and Galula.<sup>8</sup> Singapore's non-kinetic, largely political campaign against the MCP presented an excellent opportunity for the study of insurgent political activities and an analysis of the strategy employed by the Singapore government to defeat the communist insurgency. Upon closer analysis, this

strategy was essentially nation building and was an effective strategy for counterinsurgency. Nation building while neutralizing the communists' disruptive efforts created national, economic and social progress, and won Singapore the support of the population. The case study of this non-military campaign facilitates a sharper focus and understanding of the systemic solutions to counterinsurgency.



## PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

The purpose of this paper is to present a case study of Singapore's counterinsurgency strategy against the MCP and their subversive activities, so that readers can better understand the underlying political struggle and effects of non-kinetic counterinsurgency operations. While Singapore's counterinsurgency strategy proved to be successful in this case, readers are also cautioned against applying this template to other counterinsurgency campaigns as the intricacies of each situation and their environments will be different. Moreover, insurgencies that have progressed into "hot revolutionary wars" would definitely require military action, which would call for a different overall strategy than what was used in Singapore. However, it is still very important to understand and be mindful of the underlying political struggle when conducting operations, military or otherwise. Any undesired effects on the population during military operations will be detrimental to the counterinsurgents and could take years to heal.<sup>9</sup>

This paper will provide a brief historical background to the MCP operations in Singapore and cross-reference a few events in the more well-known Malayan Emergency to give readers a reference timeframe. Using the tools available in Operational Design, this essay will identify the Centers of Gravity of the MCP and the Singapore Government. It will then analyze the critical factors and identify decisive points in Singapore's counterinsurgency strategy. The essay will also highlight significant tasks Singapore undertook to control these decisive points.

## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MALAYAN COMMUNIST PARTY

Communism in the Malayan peninsula (Singapore is an island of 269 square-miles at the southern tip of the Malayan peninsula) can be traced back to 1925, where members of the Chinese Communist Party arrived in Singapore to spread the movement. The target population was the Chinese people who arrived in droves over the past 100 years to work in the British colonies. A nucleus of cadres, together with leading Indonesian Communists who escaped from Indonesia following a failed Communist uprising in Indonesia (1926-27), formed the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) during a meeting in Singapore in 1930. It is interesting to note that a Vietnam Communist, Ho Chi Minh, was also in attendance of this meeting.<sup>10</sup>

From the 1920s to 1942, the MCP organized anti-Japanese resistance, which included sending donations and funds back to China to support the war effort against Japan.<sup>11</sup> From 1942 to 1945, the MCP formed their military arm, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) to wage a guerilla war against the Japanese during the Japanese invasion. These actions boosted the credibility of the MCP in the eyes of the Malayan and Singaporean Chinese population, who had largely suffered during the Japanese occupation for sending money to support China. In contrast, the British credibility suffered because of their defeat in the Malayan peninsula. These events set the underlying political sentiments and swung the Chinese population support in favor of the communist. When the British colonial authorities returned to the peninsula after the Japanese surrender, the MCP were initially granted legal status because they allied with the British during World War II. The MCP used this status to prepare its efforts to subvert the Malayan government.<sup>12</sup>

From 1945 to 1948, MCP activities were constitutional and aboveground as they leveraged their improved credibility to expand their support base.<sup>13</sup> Beginning in 1948, the MCP waged a guerilla war in the jungle of Malaya, and the declared “state of Emergency” was not lifted until 1960. This period of the “Malayan Emergency” was well-studied in most schools for professional military education. The progress of the MCP insurgency followed the orthodox pattern of development as described by Galula, which is typical of communists.<sup>14</sup> The “Malayan Emergency” had progressed from a cold revolutionary war to a hot revolutionary war. However, the communist insurgency in Singapore remained as a cold revolutionary war throughout the “Malayan Emergency”, and the MCP’s subversive activities continued throughout the 1960s. A ‘peaceful agitation’ approach to power was much more compelling than in Malaya.<sup>15</sup> Then UK governor of Singapore, Robert Black, assessed that the communist threat in Singapore was more insidious than upcountry Malaya.<sup>16</sup> The MCP threat in Singapore remained throughout the 1960s after the conclusion of the “Malayan Emergency”. The newly independent Singapore government blended counterinsurgency and nation-building activities to “immunize” the country against further subversion. The MCP formally disbanded in 1989 after the Hat Yai Peace Agreement and resettled peacefully in Southern Thailand.<sup>17</sup> Some elements of the MCP found refuge in China.<sup>18</sup>

## UNDERSTANDING THE PLAYING FIELD IN SINGAPORE

In a 1956 letter from the Robert Black to the UK Secretary of State for the Colonies Sir Alan Lennox-Boyd, he reported that the Singapore government enjoyed no support and said that it was like a “mushroom; all head, thin body, no roots.”<sup>19</sup> Black also reported that:

“the communist threat on the island as more insidious than upcountry, and the measures taken to counter it – detention without trial, tear gas, water hoses, deregistration of unions, the banning of associations used for subversive purposes – treated the symptoms but did not cure the disease. Although the security forces could prevent a breakdown of public services or major disorders, their methods simultaneously produced more anti-government and anti-British youngsters to join the growing ranks of the Communist United Front organizations. Under a democratic system of one man, one vote, it was only a matter of time before the Chinese middle school students and the young Chinese-speaking workers brought in a legitimate, elected pro-communist government.”<sup>20</sup>

A combination of two factors made the MCP insurgency strategy in Singapore take on a different character to that in Malaya. The first factor was the difference in physical environments. The jungles and the dispersed Chinese squatters in the rural parts of Malaya facilitated the MCP guerilla war and frustrated the British and Malayan counterinsurgency efforts. The small island of Singapore was largely urban and densely populated. Although surrounded by water, the island is only 1/4-mile from the mainland of Malaya. Despite some minor differences, Singapore resembles Galula’s “small star-shaped island” which is conducive to counterinsurgency.<sup>21</sup> Guerilla warfare in Singapore would be short-lived for the MCP. To avoid prosecution, the MCP had to change their strategy for subversion in Singapore.

The other factor is the population. To appreciate the effect, a social and historical understanding of the Malayan Chinese history is required. The Chinese population in the Malayan peninsula had a large impact on the subversive potential of the MCP campaign in both Malaya and Singapore. The Chinese population, most of which were first generation

immigrants, spoke mainly Chinese or their dialects, which are Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka and Hainanese. Although they were plugged into the local economy to provide for their family or send money back to their families in China, they had yet to assimilate into the local society. Their ties to China remained strong and a successful communist China continued to be a source of inspiration.<sup>22</sup> Although most were preoccupied with making a living within the status quo political systems, these factors made them highly susceptible to MCP propaganda.

A comparison of the ethnic make-up between mainland Malaya and Singapore will provide an insight into Robert Black's assessment. Mainland Malaya's population was only 36% Chinese.<sup>23</sup> The majority of the population who were ethnic Malays and Indians were not enthusiastic about replacing the government with a communist regime.<sup>24</sup> Although the MCP fought a long guerilla war in rural Malaya, they were unlikely to win overwhelming support of the Malayan population. The initial success of the MCP guerilla campaign, which resulted in the declaration of the "state of emergency", was largely due to the post-War chaos and the perceived ineptitude of the British colonial administration. However, the emerging political system in Malaya, supported by state and federal elections, resulted in proportional ethnic representation; i.e. Chinese were the minority in the state and federal governments.<sup>25</sup> The MCP support was reduced to small pockets of discontented rural Chinese and any MCP hopes of political power were dashed. The new Malayan government had the people's mandate to openly combat the MCP without political backlash.

In contrast, Singapore's population was 74% Chinese, 15% Malays, 8% Indians.<sup>26</sup> While terrain and geography seem to favor the counterinsurgents in Singapore, the ethnic makeup of Singapore's population counterbalanced that effect and even tipped the balance in favor of the communist insurgents. The MCP had real potential to win majority support and seize power in

the government. The MCP kept subversive activities within the legal bounds. This meant non-disclosure of their communist affiliations, reaching into the Chinese population through grassroots organizations and forming political fronts to challenge the colonial government openly. In addition, Britain intended to grant Singapore self-governance, and only maintain oversight for defense and foreign affairs. This gave the MCP an excellent opportunity to subvert the incumbent authorities, oust pro-democracy parties and seize power with the support of the population. Although the urban environment facilitated enforcement actions, such actions drew political backlash from the majority Chinese population, who were targets of communist propaganda. Any open arrest of communist suspects led to popular uproar. As a result of MCP's influence on the Chinese majority, political maneuvering was like "walking on eggshells."



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## MALAYAN COMMUNIST PARTY OPERATIONS IN SINGAPORE

Under the auspices of Britain, post-War colonial Singapore made strides towards an elected self-government. The political apathy that had characterized Singapore Chinese gradually gave way to greater political consciousness and involvement in public affairs. This resulted in a steady radicalization of Singapore politics. The MCP policy in Singapore was intimately linked to this radicalization.<sup>27</sup> Since the MCP was declared illegal during the “Emergency”, they had to work under cover and focused on activities aimed at achieving a politically legitimate foothold on the Singapore scene. Through this influence, they planned to establish the Leninist preconditions for a revolution: first, a government that no longer commanded the confidence of the people, and second, a government that had lost faith in its ability to solve its problems as growing lawlessness, misery and violence overwhelmed it.<sup>28</sup> The MCP employed two techniques to widen this hold: first, create new front organizations and strengthen old organizations in all walks of life, and second, the steady radicalization of the political atmosphere.<sup>29</sup>

The MCP created front organizations to stir sentiments of anti-British Chinese nationalism, which were amplified by poor living conditions, uncertainty of employment and future citizenship status. They made deliberate attempts to influence perceptions of anti-Chinese discriminatory treatment by the authorities. The MCP had infiltrated the Chinese middle schools since 1923. After the war, they stepped up their efforts to infiltrate and establish new fronts among trade unions, farmers and cultural groups.<sup>30</sup> Rich local Chinese businessmen also supported the MCP, not so much the communist cause, but because they championed the Chinese speaking community in Singapore.<sup>31</sup> Their reach and effectiveness of their influence was evident during the Singapore Bus Workers’ Union strike in April 1955, where workers

picketed and went on hunger strikes while boys and girls from the Chinese middle schools turned up to entertain the strikers with songs and dances.<sup>32</sup>

The MCP tactics were designed to create an atmosphere of extremism, uncertainty and ceaseless turmoil, calculated to provoke Britain and local security agencies into repressive actions that could be heightened into communal tensions and led to revolutionary actions.<sup>33</sup> The Singapore Factory and Shop Workers Association, led by the key communist figure in Singapore, announced that “the true function of a trade union is to defeat colonialism.”<sup>34</sup> Strikes were common occurrences and some led to riots. The worst period was the nine months between April and December 1955, where there were 260 work stoppages.<sup>35</sup> The Chinese middle school student protests and riots also added to this political scene. Many subsequent strikes followed the same *modus operandi* where the activists fanned out to enlist the support of other students, parents, shopkeepers and local Chinese leaders. At the first sign of police trouble, they shut themselves up in schools or factories to form a critical mass, attracted attention, won sympathy, defied authorities and provoked victimization.<sup>36</sup>

In 1956, the government attempted to “crack down” on the communists by deregistering societies, unions and arresting student leaders. In retaliation, students took over their schools in protest, rioting in two schools where mobs of more than 4000 clashed with police. Parents linked arms to protect their sons and daughters.<sup>37</sup> The communists also used martyrdom to stir revolution. During the Bus Worker riot in 1955, a Chinese student wounded by the police was not sent to the hospital, but was instead paraded around for 3 hours and died.<sup>38</sup> The communists portrayed these incidents as actions of the colonial imperialists in order to destroy the credibility of the government.

Political campaigns and election speeches allowed the government to be attacked and anti-British sentiments to be voiced without too many repercussions.<sup>39</sup> The People's Action Party (PAP), founded in 1954, appeared as the MCP's principal political front and drew support from the politically radical elements in Singapore. Although the PAP was made up of moderates and pro-communist radicals, the party was “able to rally the full support of the underground communist organization in Singapore and rally all who were sympathetic or potential converts.”<sup>40</sup> The communists eventually split from the PAP moderates in July 1961 and formed their own Barisan Socialist political party to continue influencing the political scene.<sup>41</sup>



## **CENTER OF GRAVITY AND CRITICAL FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE MALAYAN COMMUNIST PARTY**

*With a cause, the insurgent has a formidable, if intangible, asset that he can progressively transform into concrete strength.*

Galula

The political leadership behind the insurgents are often identified as the strategic center of gravity (COG.) However when these leaders are eliminated, new leaders often rise to take the place of those who had fallen and the support remained unwavering, even strengthened by the martyrdom. This shows that the insurgents' cause could transcend the physical realm to persuade the peoples' minds. Perhaps a direct physical approach would be ineffective against this great and intangible force that drives both the politicians, insurgents and the supporters. This paper will approach the strategic COG from a non-physical perspective. The identified critical factors are mostly non-physical. The critical vulnerabilities are perceptions and behaviors that can be shaped through the effects of tangible actions. The critical factors analysis is summarized in Appendix A Table A-1.

**The strategic center of gravity for the MCP was the Communist Cause.** The cause was a source of moral strength, gave freedom of action and the will to act.<sup>42</sup> The values it exuded, like discipline, selflessness and cohesiveness combine to make the communist cause a source of moral strength. In the face of corruption and perceived colonial administrative incompetence, the communist insurgents truly believed a communist system could eliminate corruption, greed and immorality, in the same way they saw the corrupt Chinese Nationalist leaders in China overthrown by the Communists. They took it upon themselves to give the people of Singapore a hope for a better system of governance and to be free from colonial rule.

The communist cause also gave the insurgents freedom to carry out their subversion activities within legal bounds and inflicting maximum political damage to the government. Staying within legal bounds also enhanced their credibility to be an alternate and acceptable form of government to the majority population. This freedom of action was given to the insurgents because the majority of Singapore's population, who were mainly Chinese, were attracted by or sympathized with the communist cause. Their support of the communist front organizations and political party, and disapproval of government actions against the communists made local law enforcement difficult. Hence, the insurgents course of action in Singapore was minimally hindered.

The success of the communists in China and a desire to replicate a similar system in Singapore gave the insurgents the will to act. The confidence and support given by the Chinese population also spurred on the insurgents' obligation to continue the relentless campaign. The will to act also fed on the moral strength given by the cause, the supporters and the sympathizers.

The communist cause, as a center of gravity, had two critical capabilities (CC). Using Kem's '*verb*' definition of CC rather than JP 5-0's '*means*'.<sup>43</sup> The first critical capability (CC1) was its ability to convince the MCP leadership that a communist system of government in Singapore was worth pursuing. The first critical requirement (CR1.1) for this capability was the political aptitude and the competence of the MCP leaders to negotiate the political arena. While the MCP leaders were effective in gaining support of the Chinese population, they needed to stand for elections, maneuver their way into the Legislative Council and be effective in debating and pushing for their agendas during council hearings. As the MCP leaders were educated in the Chinese schools, their command of the English language was weak. Singapore politics was inherently difficult for them because the Singapore constitution, bureaucracy and legislative

proceedings were written and conducted in English (CV1.1.1). They were also ineffective in pushing their agendas, defending their agendas, debating issues and exerting their presence in the Legislative Council (CV1.1.2). Some MCP leaders who were exposed to the political process became more familiar and were assets to the MCP. However, they were limited in numbers and the leaders themselves were also critical vulnerabilities (CV1.1.3).

The second critical requirement (CR1.2) was the MCP leaders' perception of ongoing support from the MCP members and the general population. Although they were individually driven by the communist cause, their continuing efforts depended on their assessment of the potential returns, which was in turn derived from their perception of the support they received. The most immediate feedback came from the MCP members (CV1.2.1). Many MCP members and individuals in the population suppressed their personal interests and needs to support the communist cause (CV1.2.2). Their participation in MCP activities took time away from their families, jobs and affected their ability to provide for their families. The collective interests of people, which were represented by organizations and clans, were also suppressed in order to support the MCP. These clans and organizations risked financial losses, deregistration or prosecution if they were linked to any illegal MCP activities (CV1.2.3).

The third critical requirement (CR1.3) was the tolerance of the colonial government to pro-communist activities. As the Chinese made up the majority of the population, their positive reception of MCP activities made it difficult for the government to crack down on the riots and strikes. However, these perceptions can be influenced (CV1.3.1) because the MCP activities are often radical and could cause social problems. The Chinese population often accepted these problems as necessary in order to progress towards a new regime, or was biased and transferred the blame onto the government instead. MCP's methods for mass persuasion often relied on

violent behavior and obstruction of public services to highlight the government's inability to provide adequate security (CV1.3.2). Besides strikes, protests and riots, the MCP would also threaten civilians or grassroots leaders who did not conform. This method was a double-edged sword because violence caused property damages and inhibited economic progress. Popular perception to these radical actions could be exploited. The MCP's suppression of non-supporters through threats and violence can also be exploited (CV1.3.3). If these non-supporters could be protected, they would provide valuable information that could help prosecute the communists. With a weak judicial system (CV1.3.4), the government was not able to prosecute MCP members who broke the law during their efforts to discredit the government. Sentencing the MCP members without a strong trial often resulted in popular uproar. Attempts to prosecute MCP members often resulted in political suicide for the government.

The fourth critical requirement was a weak government or the perception of its governing authority (CR1.4). A critical vulnerability that could jeopardize this requirement was MCP's lack of resources compared to the government (CV1.4.1). It was difficult for the MCP to portray a weak government when the government could build low cost apartments for the population. This critical requirement was also jeopardized every time the government was able to show resolve at MCP mass persuasion activities (CV1.4.2), challenge the MCP at political speeches (CV1.4.3) and debunk MCP IO campaigns (CV1.4.4).

The next critical capability of the communist cause was its ability to persuade the Chinese population to support the MCP (CC2). The first critical requirement was the population's emotional attachment and sense of pride in Communist China (CR2.1). The majority of Chinese in Singapore were recent immigrants and they saw Singapore as a temporary place of work. They sent money back to their families in China and shared China's nationalistic

pride. Even if they were not active supporters of MCP, they would at least sympathize with people who espouse the same nationalistic values. With the exception of a small minority who were English-educated, the Chinese emotional detachment from Singapore was caused by their exclusion from the political system and the larger Singapore society (CV2.1.1). They formed enclaves and clans who took care of their emotional needs. There were no social or governmental systems present to engage them emotionally. Besides the rich businessmen who were mostly emotionally detached from Singapore, the Chinese population did not have significant investments in Singapore (CV2.1.2). They were daily rated workers who did not have the capital to buy homes, properties or businesses. In addition, they did not have the necessary knowledge to negotiate the financial bureaucracy. As a result, many of them sent money back to China to build houses and invested in businesses.

The second critical requirement was a credible promise for a better future and livelihood under the MCP (CR2.2). This promise included providing social engagement, a sound economic and financial environment, better civil administration, better security and rule-of-law. The MCP had already infiltrated clans, unions and schools to socialize the population as well as set up fronts to engage the population emotionally. However, they were untested in their ability to govern (CV2.2.1). It is often easier to be the opposition party who criticizes specific government policies but not have to provide the solution or deal with the problems. It is much harder to govern a country and manage a wide range of policies in a coherent way. The MCP needed to use their political platform to lend credibility to their claims and support their promises (CV2.2.2). Their promises must be well thought out because open political speeches were subjected to challenges and debates. Besides their political platform, the MCP also used mob activities to gain support and to undermine the government. However, the work disruptions and

instability impeded economic progress and deterred investors. These actions jeopardized the MCP's credibility (CV2.2.3).

The third critical requirement was the perceived weakness of the Singapore government (CR2.3). The effect of this CR corresponded inversely to the effect of CR2.2 and perception of the population was based on the relative strength of CR2.2 and CR2.3. The well-thought through political platform and political messaging of the ruling party jeopardized this critical requirement (CV2.3.1). The resourcefulness of the government and their progressive delivery of tangible reforms also undercut this critical requirement (CV2.3.2).

The fourth critical requirement was the isolation of the Chinese population from alternative forms of social influences (CR2.4). The Chinese school system was the preferred education system for the Chinese population (CV2.4.1). The Chinese schools were funded by rich businessmen who also served on the board of directors. Most of them valued a strong Chinese tradition and some of them were sympathetic to the communists. The syllabi were unregulated by the government and the board of directors were allowed to steer the school programs and import the textbooks directly from China. The Chinese schools became breeding ground for communist activists. There was also insufficient media penetration into the Chinese population (CV2.4.2) and insufficient social avenues like organized activities and community centers (CV2.4.3). Many were only exposed to Chinese media and social networks, which reinforced their ways of life. Their traditional practices and beliefs were unchallenged despite their co-existence with many other races in Singapore. They were also not influenced by Western societal values like democracy and meritocracy, or exposed to alternative forms of culture which might help them better integrate into the Singapore society.

The fifth critical requirement was the mutual perception among Chinese organizations and key individuals that others were supportive of the MCP's cause (CR2.5). The Chinese sense of communal cohesiveness and conformance inhibited an individual or one organization from opposing the MCP's actions, especially when they believed all other organizations were supportive of the MCP. Without any organization willing to take the initiative, this perception would remain unchallenged. However, each union, clan and organization had varying priorities and interests that the government could exploit (CV2.5.1). When faced with the choice of supporting the communists or jeopardizing their interests, some organizations wavered. Although the staunchness of support and tolerance levels varied for each organization, the weaker ones would succumb to the government's pressure and created a domino effect on others.

The sixth critical requirement was the availability of effective conduits to transmit the communist cause (CR2.6). The MCP infiltrated organizations, set up front organizations to spread their cause and mobilize support. Many of these were legal organizations and although they had the potential to conduct mob action, they stayed on the right side of the law so that they would not be deregistered. The registration process and the government's power to deregister organizations was a critical vulnerability (CV2.6.1). The MCP leaders themselves were also a critical vulnerability (CV2.6.2). Their individual unique personality and charisma connected them to the people. Although more leaders would rise up to replace leaders that were removed, the new leaders take time to build their rapport and their effectiveness varies. The Chinese media was the main source of information for the Chinese population, as many of them did not understand any other languages (CV2.6.3). The British colonial authorities, the mainly English-speaking government and pro-democracy political parties were not effective in getting their messages into the Chinese media.

The Singapore government eventually targeted many of these critical vulnerabilities, which contributed to the neutralization of the MCP. Although it is almost certain that the Singapore government did not analyze the MCP COG and critical factors using the JP 5-0 method, they must have performed an effective analysis and found areas they could effectively target and weaken the MCP. It must also be acknowledged that this critical factor analysis was done with the benefit of hindsight.



## THE GOVERNMENT OF SINGAPORE

In 1819, the British colonized Singapore and used it as a trading post for the East India Company. The period of uninterrupted colonial governance lasted from 1819 to 15 Feb 1942 when the British surrendered Singapore to the Japanese. The Japanese administered Singapore until their surrender on 12 Sep 1945. Upon their return to Singapore, the British gradually began the transition for Singapore's self-governance, with locally elected officials and politicians, as the British interest in Southeast Asia diminished. In parallel, the British were also in transition for Malaya to be independent. On 31 Aug 1963, Singapore declared independence and joined the Federation of Malaysia on 16 Sep 1963 as a state of Malaysia. On 9 Aug 1965, the Federal Parliament of Malaysia enacted an amendment (Singapore Amendment) to the Constitution of Malaysia, effectively severing all ties with the state government of Singapore with immediate effect. Singapore began its own governance as an independent country from 9 Aug 1965.

During the pre-war colonial governance, the British supremacy was unquestioned. They had an empire that spanned the world. The superior status of the British in the government was accepted by the people in Singapore as a “fact of life” and the natural order of things. The unchallenged British dominance brought an atmosphere of peace and stability in Singapore.<sup>44</sup> Although the British established a few premier schools in Singapore, they sent their own children back to England to be educated. The British also kept their distance from the local population to uphold their sense of dominance.<sup>45</sup> Prominent locals of Chinese, Indian and Malay origins, most of which were educated in these premier schools, were allowed to mix with the colonial masters. Many of them were nominated to the Executive and Legislative Council. However, the rest of the population, mainly Chinese, were not integrated into the society. They formed their own enclaves, set up their own education systems and were indoctrinated in their own ways.<sup>46</sup>

The population's perception of British superiority was shattered after their surrender to the Japanese. The local population was left to fend for themselves as the British left Singapore and essential services were disrupted. This sense of survival in the face of abandonment was an awakening for the local population. It was further reinforced when the post-war colonial government began the transition for Singapore's self-governance.

The trust in the British's ability and intent for Singapore's progress was diminishing. The British administration, mainly military officers, knew that their time in power was limited. Some of them sought small valuables that they could bring with them when they return to England. In exchange, they granted permits, supplies and other privileges within their administrative powers.<sup>47</sup> The gray areas between private gifts and corruption were blurred. Local Chinese who won scholarships to London gained insights into the British colonial thinking. The British were only interested in the high paying top colonial jobs and were uninterested in the advancement of the colonies. At the national level, they were only interested in using the colonial resources like rubber and tin to secure foreign reserves and support the pound sterling.<sup>48</sup>

In 1952, the wages of the daily rated government employees in Singapore had lagged behind inflation. There were mass actions demanding higher pay and condemning the high British expatriates' pay. The good intentioned governor, Sir John Nicoll, commissioned a council to negotiate with the unions. The commission recommended wage increases that the budget could not support and was rejected. Following that, another independent commission recommended the abolishment of expatriate family allowances to promote fair treatment of all government workers.<sup>49</sup> This episode shook the already unstable colonial system and exposed the ineffectiveness of the colonial government.

Although there was an increase in the locally elected officials, the perception of ineffectiveness with the government remained. It did not help that there was no revolutionary change in the system of government to change the mindsets of the people. The locally elected officials were portrayed as pro-colonial and lackeys of the British colonial masters. This gave the MCP and the perceived revolutionary change to communism an advantage.



## CENTER OF GRAVITY AND CRITICAL FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT

Asians are culturally well-known for their respect of authority, but this respect was eroded by governing ineffectiveness, especially in a small and resource-bare country like Singapore. From the time of British rule to the post-War locally elected government, the Singapore population accepted the authority of the government, albeit their confidence waning as the British gradually transitioned Singapore toward self-governance. Prior to the MCP's bid for power, the legitimacy of the Singapore government was not in question because the population did not have an alternate choice of government. With the MCP conducting an insurgency, the incumbent government must regain the people's confidence in their ability to govern effectively. It did not help that the government inherited the perception associated with the post-war British colonial government. This would prevent the population from supporting an MCP take over and the set up of a communist system in Singapore. In a typical counterinsurgency, the strategic center of gravity is usually the governing authority. This was partly true for the counterinsurgency in Singapore but considering Singapore's recent history and cultural uniqueness, using governing authority as the strategic center of gravity did not provide sufficient focus. **The strategic center of gravity for the government of Singapore was *Effective Governance*.**

Effective governance not only brought stability and security to Singapore, it gave the population essential services and created economic progress. Effective governance restored the people's confidence in the government. It became a source of moral strength not only for the government officials, but also for the people of Singapore because the progress gave them a sense of hope in their futures. The economy enhanced by effective governance translated into

physical strength because the funding for internal and external security forces increased. The people's respect and trust of an effective government gave the freedom of action in administrative and legislative policies. The instinct to protect the results of effective governance and the urge to meet the expectations of the people gave the government the will to act.

In the case of the Singapore government, the 'friendly' COG must be strengthened and protected. Critical factor analysis would yield vulnerabilities that either existed and must be resolved with government policies and actions, or could potentially be exploited by the MCP and hence must be protected. Appendix A Table A-2 provides a summary of the critical factor analysis.

Effective governance, as Singapore's strategic COG, had three critical capabilities. The first critical capability (CC1) was its ability to provide adequate security. With adequate security, the economy, the people and their ways of life would not be threatened by internal or external threats. The government must be able to deter internal threats and give assurance to the people by effectively prosecuting offenders. As for external threats, the government must be able to deter external threats with a credible defense force.

The first critical requirement (CR1.1) is an effective police force. While the British left behind a good police system, the ethnic mix of the police force (CV1.1.1) needed to be addressed. A Chinese police squad prosecuting a Malay in a predominantly Malay area and vice-versa would create unwanted racial friction. Conversely, a squad may be sympathetic to offenders of the same ethnicity (CV1.1.2). The rule-of-law must be upheld (CR1.2) to support an effective police force. Without a strong judicial system, offenders arrested by the police would get away with their crimes, be recalcitrant and even seek revenge against witnesses and

juries. Culturally, Asians are superstitious and they had an aversion to convict an accused (CV1.2.1) because they believed in karma, fate and retribution. This aversion was even stronger if the punishment was the death penalty. A jury system in Singapore was ineffective. The people were also averse to getting involved in criminal cases because they feared retribution from the MCP (CV1.2.2). It was difficult to get people to come forward as witnesses when the MCP used a mix of threats and sympathy within the population. An effective intelligence agency was also required to support internal security (CR1.3) against the MCP. However, informants were not forth coming (CV1.3.1). In addition, the British withdrawal could mean a drain of intelligence expertise (CV1.3.2).

The fourth critical requirement was an effective armed force, which was required for external security (CR1.4). Singapore had been reliant on the British and Malayan forces for external security (CV1.4.1). With the British withdrawal and the eventual separation from Malaysia, the people in Singapore would not feel secure from external threats, especially with their memories still fresh from the Japanese invasion and Indonesian confrontation. A fledgling Singapore lacked experienced military trainers (CV1.4.2) and military hardware (CV1.4.3).

Besides the government having the means to provide security, the population must also perceive a sense of security (CR1.5). The MCP propaganda chipping away at the population's sense of security (CV1.5.1) and the anti-government Chinese media (CV1.5.2) providing insufficient coverage of the government's security enhancements impacted the populations' perceptions. The unruly activities of the Chinese organizations, unions and students also decreased the sense of security (CV1.5.3).

The ability to provide security depended very much on the availability of funds (CR1.6).

Singapore's lack of natural resources (CV1.6.2) made it very difficult to generate revenue.

While initially relying on the British and the Malayan natural resources, an independent

Singapore in 1965 had to stimulate its own economy to fund all the security initiatives.

Corruption also reduced the amount of public funds available for national development  
(CV1.6.2).

The second critical capability was the government's ability to generate revenue and stimulate economic progress (CC2). The first critical requirement was suitable infrastructure support (CR2.1). The British had established a deep-water port, railway system and roads. However, the port and maintenance workers were daily-rated workers and they were often disenchanted with their low pay and work benefits (CV2.1.1). The second critical requirement was an educated workforce (CR2.2). The working class population in Singapore must be educated with relevant skills and knowledge so that foreign companies could hire workers with the relevant technical skills without the need for much training. However, the school syllabi mirrored the British system and were disconnected with the economic demands (CV2.2.1). In addition, the unregulated Chinese schools were not aligned with the economic needs of Singapore (CV2.2.2). There were also social biases and disconnects with the educational qualifications of various ethnic groups (CV2.2.3).

The third critical requirement that would contribute to economic progress was social peace and harmony (CR2.3), without which foreign investors would be dissuaded and local businesses would be disrupted. The ethnic divide and friction (CV2.3.1), disenchanted workers (CV2.3.2) and clans, unions and organizations (CV2.3.3) and critical vulnerabilities that could impede CR2.3 and could also be exploited by the MCP. The fourth critical requirement was for

foreign companies to perceive that Singapore was a viable investment (CR2.4). Industrial unrest (CV2.4.1), corruption (CV2.4.2), internal and external security of Singapore (CV2.4.3) could damage foreign perceptions. Foreign investors also assessed Singapore's tax policies and financial bureaucracy (CV2.4.4) to determine viability for investments. The fifth critical requirement was a suitable market for Singapore products and services (CR2.5). International recognition (CV2.5.1), including regional countries, would mean trade opportunities. The standard of living and spending power of the local population (CV2.5.2) would also expand the market.

The third critical capability was the ability to generate social progress and provide a sense of social well-being (CC3). The government's ability to move the society forward, first by meeting basic needs then progressing along social development, gave the people of Singapore a sense of hope for the future. The promise of a better future and tangible initial progress spurred the people to invest their trust in the government. This trust manifested as a pacified population, which benefited internal security. It is critical that the people's basic needs are met (CR3.1). This foundation must be laid before progress can be made. Due to increasing population and the small size of Singapore, the scarcity of land and resulting high price for housing (CV3.1.1) and the strain on services (CV3.1.2) are critical vulnerabilities. There must also be sufficient funds for basic services and social initiatives (CR3.2). A strong economy would inherently generate state funds but corruption is a critical vulnerability (CV3.2.1).

The progress of a multi-ethnic Singapore society required ethnic and social integration and engagement (CR3.3). More importantly, the population must have a positive perception of the government's efforts in this regard. The inherent cultural affinity of similar ethnicity (CV3.3.1) meant that integration would not occur naturally in the near-term. It could potentially

cause resistance to integration efforts. Differing social and political interests in the different ethnic groups (CV3.3.2) made it difficult for the recruitment of politicians from all ethnicities and the perception of ethnically fair policies. The media (CV3.3.3) was a double-edged sword for the government to elaborate on their integration policies or for the MCP to fan anti-government sentiments. The population's sense of belonging to Singapore (CR3.4) would also contribute to societal progress. Being a predominantly migrant society, a majority of the people felt more attached to their country of origin. A unique Singapore identity (CV3.4.1) must be created in lieu of the lack of a common history. Individuals and families could also be anchored with individual investment opportunities in Singapore and social security (CV3.4.2).



## THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE

In comparison to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, the MCP insurgency in Singapore was mostly non-violent and did not involve military action. In contrast, the Egyptian Revolution was catalyzed by the social media and international pressure but the MCP insurgency in Singapore was a slow process, gradually chipping away at the government's credibility and gaining support from the population.<sup>50</sup> As the MCP insurgency in Singapore took place during a period of transition to self-governance, political competition and activities were common and accepted by the colonial government as a way for continued government legitimacy. Although the MCP had to compete with other political parties who were also vying for office, the competition also gave the MCP an excuse to form a legal political front in Singapore, as long as they did not openly declare their communist affiliations. Although the incumbent government was aware of the MCP members and their links to the guerilla warfare in Malaya, the MCP members could not be removed or arrested without popular uproar.

Ironically, the most effective method of countering the MCP insurgents did not come from the government, but from a core group of English educated professionals led by Lee Kuan Yew, who eventually formed the Singapore government after 1959. Unlike the majority Chinese population in Singapore who were first-generation Chinese immigrants, Lee's family had been in Singapore for four generations and were integrated into the local society. Like most Chinese who had integrated into the local society, Lee spoke fluent English and Malay but little Chinese.<sup>51</sup> As a lawyer, he had represented trade unions and blue-collared workers in Singapore, who were mainly Chinese. Having seen the Chinese people willingness for hard work, organization and self-motivation in various organized mass actions and social activities, Lee knew that the government and eventually the country needed to harness the potential of these

dynamic young people and prevent them from falling into communist hands.<sup>52</sup> He needed a way to tap into the potential of the majority Chinese population, both for political support of a democratic socialist system and to wrestle them away from the MCP's grip.<sup>53</sup>

Lee, whose anti-communism stance for Singapore was made clear much later, invariably came into contact with the MCP who had infiltrated the unions which he legally represented.<sup>54</sup> Lee's success in industrial negotiations, his energy and his ability to negotiate Singapore's legal system, largely because of his English education and London-based law degree, attracted the communists.<sup>55</sup> The MCP and Lee's core group of politically like-minded professionals formed an unlikely alliance. As a result, the People's Action Party (PAP) was formed in 1954. The MCP needed Lee to negotiate the political system and bureaucracy, and the MCP brought the support of the majority Chinese population to PAP. In a way, Lee had exploited MCP critical vulnerabilities CV1.1.1, CV1.1.2 and CV1.1.3 to gain a larger support base, which the colonial government and other local English-educated politician would not have.

Being associated with the MCP was a dicey situation for Lee, especially under the Emergency regulations at the time. He had to remain sufficiently radical to keep the sizable left-wing of his party pacified and not be seen as a British stooge, while at the same time stay in the reasonable good graces of the government and its British directed security agency.<sup>56</sup> By 1955, the British commissioner recognized the different agendas between the Chinese communist and Chinese Malayans, and was more willing to work with respectable locals.<sup>57</sup> However, this arrangement resulted in MCP members taking positions in the government. The de facto leader of the MCP in Singapore, Lim Chin Siong, became a member of the legislative assembly.<sup>58</sup> With MCP's increasing bid for power, Lee had to convince the government that the next change in the Singapore constitution did not open the gates for a communist takeover.<sup>59</sup>

In February 1959, Lee assessed that the high unemployment at 12 per cent, 4 per cent growth rate and grim economic prospects did not bode well for the Singapore government. Without a large domestic market for new industries and a bad climate of labor unrest, Lee was worried that the government would not withstand the political assaults from the MCP. Corruption would have spread from the ministers to the civil service itself under the incumbent Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock, and there would no longer be an effective administration to implement PAP policies. This situation essentially described threats to the friendly critical vulnerabilities CV1.5.1, CV1.5.3, CV1.6.1, CV1.6.2, CV2.1.1, CV2.3.2, CV2.4.1, CV2.4.2, CV2.5.2, CV3.1.1, CV3.1.2 and CV3.2.1. Lee decided that the PAP could no longer serve as an opposition party but should compete to be the ruling party.<sup>60</sup> In May 1959, the PAP won 43 out of 51 seats and became the ruling party in the Singapore Government.<sup>61</sup> It also meant that the MCP elements in PAP were in power.

Bill Goode, who was the former governor under the British colonial power and the transitory Head-of-State for Singapore, best described the political struggle between the non-communists and the MCP in his letter to his Secretary-of-State in Britain:

“The new ministers are intelligent men. They have given much thought to their political programme which was put to the electorate in carefully prepared speeches. They are extreme socialist by conviction, but they realize the practical limitations imposed by Singapore’s peculiar circumstances as an international trading center. They also realize the gravity of the economic problem presented by a rapidly increasing population expecting a high standard of living in a city which depends for its income upon winning business against keen competition. Above all else, they are obsessed by the threat of communism.

To succeed they must retain the support of the Chinese working and student classes. In this lies their weakness, since they will be obliged to indulge in popular gestures which will antagonize the business and commercial class upon which they depend for economic progress. Their obsession with the political and ideological struggle to win the minds of the masses to democratic socialism in preference to

communism is likely to prejudice a competent approach to the other problems of making Singapore's economy work.

They call themselves non-communist and are at pains to show that they are not puppets of the West. They are sensitive even to praise from the West, since they consider that it damages the popular support of the left-wing Chinese population of Singapore which they must firmly retain against the alternate leadership of the communists.”<sup>62</sup>



## NEUTRALIZING THE MALAYAN COMMUNIST PARTY

With the PAP in control of the government, Singapore's broad strategy was to stay ahead of the MCP in politics and not be outmaneuvered.<sup>63</sup> The government also did some shrewd maneuvering of its own, assessing its political strength constantly and implementing regulations to curtail communist activities. Part of this measure was to change laws to give the government better control over pro-communist unions and Chinese schools.<sup>64</sup> The popular support given to the PAP also meant that legislative changes and internal security measures were more palatable to the general population. The government was essentially shrinking the MCP CR1.3 and CR1.4, targeting CV2.4.1 and CV2.6.1 while protecting friendly CV1.5.3, CV2.2.2, CV2.3.3 and CV2.4.1.

The government also leveraged PAP members of different ethnicities, including the left-wing PAP members, to reach out into the community, clans, associations and cultural groups. . Community efforts include setting up community centers that ran classes for songs, dances, cooking, sewing, literacy and technical skills.<sup>65</sup> The government was addressing the friendly CR2.3 and CR3.3, targeting the MCP's critical vulnerability CV2.4.3.

The changing government policies, essentially PAP policies, made it increasing difficult for the MCP to operate undercover and conduct subversive activities in Singapore. Unable to see eye-to-eye with the PAP driven government policies, Lim Chin Siong and the pro-communist left-wing of the PAP broke away from the PAP to form the Barisan Socialist.<sup>66</sup> By then, the general population was already familiar with PAP and their good track record. With 22,000 new low-cost apartments built by the state, construction of a new school every three weeks and more than 200 miles of roads since 1959, the PAP had tangible progress to show.<sup>67</sup> With links to

clans, associations, more than a hundred community centers and various cultural groups, the PAP no longer needed the pro-communist to sustain the support from the population.<sup>68</sup>

The government of Singapore had prepared the ground and brightened the social and economic outlook for Singapore. MCP mass actions and riots were declared illegal because they were damaging to Singapore's stability, social cohesion and economy. By then the government had the support of the population and had the clout to deregister organizations that acted illegally or arrest perpetrators of unrest.<sup>69</sup> The resulting political support for maintaining security and rule-of-law in conjunction with the weakening of MCP's grip and political significance, many Chinese clans and associations aligned themselves with the government. This open defiance of the Chinese community to the MCP had a domino effect on many other organizations who were initially supportive of or threatened by the MCP.<sup>70</sup> These actions targeted the MCP CV1.1.3, CV1.2.2, CV1.2.3, CV1.3.1, CV1.3.2, CV1.4.2, CV2.2.3, CV2.5.1, CV2.6.1 and CV2.6.2.

The MCP were desperate to regain their ground by stirring up sentiments. Following a failed revolt in Brunei on 8 Dec 1962, Lim Chin Siong, together with 115 other pro-communist activists were arrested for openly denouncing the British colonial government and supporting the revolt.<sup>71</sup> This time, there were no riots, no bloodshed and no protests after the arrests. The public now understood that the communists fell outside the legal bounds and had it coming. On Dec 1965, Dr Lee Siew Choh, chairman of Barisan Socialist declared that the party would boycott the Parliament, abandon the constitutional politics and take the battle to the streets. He attempted to tug at the heartstrings of the Chinese by imitating the Cultural Revolution in China. Like the Red Guards, they carried banners, placards and clashed with the police. They were arrested and charged with rioting.<sup>72</sup>

With the political front of the MCP and its leaders in Singapore arrested, the communist grip on Singapore relaxed and the MCP activities could not overshadow the progress of the government. The government had earned the trust of the people by providing tangible economic progress, social development, security and standing firm in the face of the communists' attempts to disrupt Singapore's progress. However, the MCP did not formally disband until 1989 and the communist threat still existed, albeit sporadic and often unsuccessful.<sup>73</sup> Often in insurgencies, unexposed cells could still hibernate with the intent to reignite hostilities when the conditions presented themselves.<sup>74</sup> Plots to assassinate ministers and high-ranking police officers were uncovered in 1965.<sup>75</sup> As Singapore was a young country, instabilities and new challenges continue to provide inexhaustible opportunities for new communist tactical foray.<sup>76</sup> The government of Singapore continued on the path of nation building as a safeguard and at the same time eliminating the pre-conditions for any potential insurgencies. They also continued to monitor suspicious insurgent activities through the Internal Security Department.

## COUNTERINSURGENCY DECISIVE POINTS AND NATION BUILDING

Analyzing both the friendly and adversary critical factors, and considering Singapore's unique historical, social and geographical context, six systemic decisive points were identified for Singapore's counterinsurgency. They are *Security*, *Rule of Law*, *Economy*, *Integration*, *Corruption* and *Perception*. The combination of these decisive points essentially supported the effort of nation building. This should not be unexpected because building a cohesive society under an effective government eliminates the pre-conditions for an insurgency as described by Galula, and this intrinsically forces out the insurgents. Again, the Chinese medicine analogy comes to mind.

*Sanctuary*, as identified by Reilly as one of the decisive points in COIN, was not a decisive point for the counterinsurgency in Singapore because the only sanctuary the MCP had was political space accorded by the support of the Chinese population. The MCP did not conduct guerilla warfare in Singapore because physical sanctuary was not available considering its urban environment and the fact that Singapore is an island. Malaya was not an ideal sanctuary because of the British efforts in the Malayan Emergency. Even after the end of the Emergency, Malaya's clear-cut anti-communist policies, supported by a majority Malay population, gave the MCP no opportunity to operate constitutionally in Malaya.<sup>77</sup> Although Indonesia was fighting its own communists, the main islands were too far from Singapore. According to Galula, the smaller archipelagic islands nearer to Singapore were also not ideal for insurgents. In the case of Singapore, Reilly's *Reintegration* was conceptually similar but was termed as *Integration* because a majority of the population were immigrants who had never assimilated into the society.

For Singapore, *Security* and *Rule of Law* complemented each other. *Security* was already in place due to the British colonial presence but the Singapore government had to tailor it for better effectiveness considering its multi-ethnic population. *Rule of Law* was also set in place and took on the flavor of the British judicial system. However, cultural sensitivities of the Chinese and the local Muslim customs were not fully compatible with the British system. In addition, the judicial system was disrupted and frustrated by the MCP. MCP threats, in conjunction with support from the population often resulted in the miscarriages of justice and mistrials even if the security forces were effective in apprehending perpetrators.<sup>78</sup> The population's confidence in the rule-of-law was lacking and it stemmed from the lack of trust in the government.

*Economy* and *Corruption* were not only decisive points that complement each other in generating state revenue for the effective funding of public services, they were essential for addressing the population's lack of trust in the government. In a small migrant society that lacks natural resources, survival was one of the key concerns of the population. The ability of a clean and corruption-free government to stimulate economic progress would earn the trust of the people. Reducing corruption and aggressively prosecuting corruption within the government would also bolster the people's perception of justice and trust in the government. Conversely, *Security* and *Rule of Law* were also the preconditions for a healthy economy. Hence, the first four decisive points were intricately linked and control of these decisive points would have to be balanced evenly.

*Economy* was also one key difference in Singapore's counterinsurgency compared to various Foreign Internal Defense (FID) operations conducted by US and coalition forces. Specifically, it is the effort to build financial infrastructure, policies and systems to enable the

host country to grow its own economy after the termination of financial aid. Without a sustainable economy to fund public services, economic and social initiatives, a government would quickly lose credibility and their support would collapse. Although FID already included nation building activities, helping a host country build a sustainable economy would be totally construed as nation building and not be politically acceptable within the domestic population of the US and coalition partners.<sup>79</sup> From a Realist perspective, building a host nation's economy is against any country's interest because it is introducing a potential competitor into the world market. Financial aid is more politically acceptable, however, host country programs funded by financial aids could only continue as long as funding is available. It not only fosters a dependency on foreign financial aid and creates a disincentive for self-sustenance, it erodes the host nation government's credibility to support their own country.

*Integration* created a harmonious society and enhanced *Security* and *Rule of Law*. *Integration* reduced the sources of tensions and fostered the acceptance of common law and justice. *Integration* also enhanced *Economy* because it brought social advancement in terms of education, standards of living and built an inclusive workforce.

*Perception* was a decisive point that enhanced the other five decisive points. Although the advantages gained by the five decisive points would eventually become clear to the Singapore population, the government did not have the luxury of time. The impending withdrawal of the British, state survival and mounting pressure from the MCP meant that the people were eager to make a choice. Although progress was tangible and obvious, it was important for the government to communicate their intent, efforts and results to the people. This was especially crucial when the results were not immediately visible. In addition, the government had to compete against MCP propaganda for a positive perception.

In essence, nation building is the best strategy for counterinsurgency. It is definitely worthwhile to commit wholeheartedly to nation building during FID operations because, as unacceptable as it is to the domestic population, building a host nation that can sustain itself may cost less than having to prop it up indefinitely.



## CONTROLLING THE DECISIVE POINTS

### Security

Security was one of the decisive points that the Government of Singapore controlled since the colonial government was in place. However, it was a decisive point that was weakening under the influence of the MCP. Although the MCP did not have sufficient physical strength to overcome the police, they exploited each clash with the police to discredit the ability of the government to provide security. While physical security was in place, the government's ability to reduce future clashes depended on its political will to prosecute the ring-leaders, who were MCP members. The government led by David Marshall prior to May 1956 did not have the political will to face the MCP who had the support of the population.<sup>80</sup> Without the political will, increasing unrest would decrease the perception of security despite the government having sufficient security forces. The other decisive points would increase the political will and enhance security.

The government realized that physical numbers had to be complemented by the right training. The police had to be disciplined, firm and sensitive to racial and communist tactics. The use of firepower must be judicious so that incidences open to MCP exploitation, like the one where a rioting Chinese student was shot and wounded by the police and was paraded around by rioters for 3 hours until he was dead, were kept to a minimum.<sup>81</sup> Racial mix within the police force was also important. Chinese police officers prosecuting Malays or Malay police officers prosecuting the Chinese would be disastrous considering the state of ethnic integration at that time. Loyalty of Malay police officers would also be strained if the Malays in Singapore were to

riot for a re-merger with Malaysia after Singapore's separation from the Federation.<sup>82</sup> Police training and recruitment addressed friendly CV1.1.1 and CV1.1.2.

The British Special Branch gathered and provided intelligence on communist and anti-colonial activities in Singapore. They were effective in surveillance, intercepting communications and profiling individuals who were suspected communists or anti-colonialists.<sup>83</sup> In 1960, the Internal Security Department was established and took over from Special Branch before the complete withdrawal of the British.<sup>84</sup> This addressed friendly CV1.3.2.

### **Rule of Law**

To ensure sustainable security, the government must be able to uphold the rule of law. Without effective prosecution of security violators, having strong security would eventually degrade into a game of cat-and-mouse where arrested violators had to be released because of an incompetent judicial system. Initially, the colonial authorities employed the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance as stop-gap measure, which allowed detention without trial. This was implemented as part of Emergency Laws during the Malayan Emergency.<sup>85</sup> Although it facilitated the removal of violators from the society despite a weak judicial system, the absence of a fair trial caused much dissent, especially among communist supporters. This measure targeted MCP CV1.1.3, CV1.3.3 and CV1.3.4, protected friendly CV1.2.1 and CV1.2.2, but left friendly CV1.5.1 wide open for the MCP to exploit. However, considering the relative advantage of this measure, detention without trial was retained in Singapore as part of the Internal Security Act in 1960.<sup>86</sup> This power was used judiciously so that CV1.5.1 was less vulnerable.

The jury system did not work in Singapore. Asian superstitious beliefs and a general reluctance to take responsibility for severe punishments led to many acquittals by the jury, even in cases where there was clear evidence to convict.<sup>87</sup> In addition, fear of retribution from the communists, who used murder, arson and acid-throwing, cowed civilian into a conspiracy of silence.<sup>88</sup> A successful criminal lawyer during that time claimed that he had 99 acquittals out of 100 cases he defended for murder. He did not believe that they were wrongly charged or otherwise, but he merely did his duty to defend.<sup>89</sup> Miscarriages of justice of this kind served to discredit the rule-of-law and judicial system. The jury system in Singapore was abolished in 1959 except for murder, followed by a complete abolition in 1969.<sup>90</sup> This targeted MCP CV1.3.3 and CV1.3.4, and totally removed friendly CV1.2.1 from the list of vulnerabilities.

During the period of Japanese occupation between 1944 and 1945, there were no burglaries although many people did not have enough to eat. Doors could be left unlocked day or night.<sup>91</sup> This was the result of the extreme punishments during the Japanese occupation where looters were beheaded and exhibited at bridges and main road junctions.<sup>92</sup> Singapore's approach to punishment was influenced by the orderly behavior during the Japanese occupation in contrast with the disorderly period when the British Military Administration tried to establish the rule of law. Singapore took on a pragmatic, not ideological approach to crime and punishment.<sup>93</sup> Singapore found that harsh punishment was effective, and adopted a punishment method the British used in Singapore. The British used to have whipping using cat-o'-nine-tails or rattan in Singapore. After the war, whipping was abolished but caning with rattan was retained. Singapore found caning to be more effective than long prison terms and imposed it for crimes related to drugs, arms trafficking, rape, illegal entry into Singapore and vandalizing of public property.<sup>94</sup>

Singapore needed to establish a grip on the unions and their political strikes which not only damaged the economy, they threatened security. With the help of the Australians, well-known for their good industrial relations, Singapore established an arbitration court. With this system, any major strikes can be ordered into arbitration. Once referred to arbitration, it was illegal for a union to continue the stoppage pending the outcome of arbitration. In addition, the law required a secret ballot by union members before a strike. This secrecy precluded peer pressure or threats of retribution from coercing unwilling members. Unions in violation faced deregistration.<sup>95</sup> This measure targeted MCP CV1.3.3, CV1.4.2, CV1.4.4 and CV2.6.1 while protecting friendly CV1.5.1, CV1.5.3, CV2.1.1, CVCV2.3.2, CV2.3.2 and CV2.4.1.

Singapore also imposed a law to require all who enter the political arena to form a political party. This forced the MCP and their supporters out into the open, made them easy to monitor and let the public scrutinize and judge their political platforms. This also facilitated open debates, which allowed the government to counter or debunk any anti-government propaganda.<sup>96</sup> This law targeted MCP CV1.1.2, CV1.3.1, CV1.4.3, CV1.4.4, CV2.2.1, CV2.2.2 and CV2.3.1 while protecting friendly CV1.5.1.

## **Economy**

Singapore was not an agrarian society. Its small size and limited sea area could not support subsistence farming or fishing. The locals' basic needs could only be sustained by trade. *Economy* was a key decisive point because all the other decisive points would not be sustainable without a strong economy. The Singapore government realized that without finances, many of its policies could not be implemented.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, the British also realized that a sound

economic base was a key factor in the “New Villages” when they fought the MCP in the jungles of Malaya.<sup>98</sup>

The loss of British military expenditure between 1968 and 1971 was a blow to Singapore’s economy. It cost Singapore 20% of its GDP, 30,000 jobs from direct employment and 40,000 jobs from related services. Determined to build an economy without the aid of the British, the Singapore government needed to create a new kind of economy that did not depend on natural resources. It started the tourism industry, which was labor intensive and required cooks, maids, waiters, laundry, cleaners, tour guides, drivers, souvenir and handicraft makers, but required little capital. It also attracted investors to build factories for textile, toys and garments.<sup>99</sup> To expand the workforce and tap into the female population who still saw their traditional role as homemakers, the government built these factories in housing estates to enhance convenience, especially for the women.<sup>100</sup> By the completion of British withdrawal in 1971, the people of Singapore were quietly confident. 30,000 retrenched workers were absorbed by industries, there was minimal unemployment and no land or building left derelict.<sup>101</sup>

The Singapore government built its reputation as a stable and competent government to attract more investors. It could not allow recent animosity with neighbors to close in the trade opportunities. It reached out to the developed world, America, Europe and Japan. The government attracted investments based on hard-working people, good infrastructure and sound financial policies. To reduce the amount of bureaucracy for foreign investors, Singapore created the Economic Development Board, which functioned as a one-stop agency to sort out investors requirements with land, power, water, environmental and work safety. This eliminated the need for investors to deal with multiple ministries and departments. By the 1970s, Singapore had attracted industrial giants like Texas Instruments, Hewlett-Packard, and General Electric.<sup>102</sup>

Through these economic measures, the Singapore government effectively targeted the MCP CV1.4.1, CV2.1.1, CV2.1.2, CV2.3.1, CV2.3.2 and protected friendly CV1.6.2, CV2.2.3, CV2.2.3, CV2.4.3 and CV2.5.1

## **Corruption**

Corruption within the government was a source for discontent for the population of Singapore. Several ministers in the 1958 cabinet had poor reputations for honesty and integrity.<sup>103</sup> Minimizing corruption was a good way to maximize the return of state revenue to the people in terms of services and social programs. It also fostered a more conducive economic environment. In Singapore's case, reducing corruption was also an excellent way to remove one of the MCP's political strengths. The Chinese communists valued selflessness, dedication and sacrifice, and displayed these virtues by having spartan lifestyles. These values were the drive behind their ambitious efforts to displace the National Chinese leaders in China, who were corrupt, greedy, immoral and incompetent. The same communist virtues and corrupt environment gave the MCP its strength and popular support in Singapore.<sup>104</sup>

The PAP-led government in Singapore believed that petty power invested in men who cannot live on their salaries was an invitation to misuse that power.<sup>105</sup> The government addressed corruption directly by conducting aggressive investigations; and indirectly by reducing petty powers and increasing pay, which were the preconditions for corruption. The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) was created in Feb 1960, giving the state power to prosecute corrupt individuals under the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance.<sup>106</sup> The CPIB was empowered to investigate the personal finances of civil servants and their families. The CPIB initially targeted lower and middle levels of police, hawker inspectors and land bailiffs.

Following the reduction of petty powers from these middle-level officials by simplifying procedures, removing discretion, establishing clear guidelines and even doing away with permits and approvals for less important areas, the CPIB focused on the higher echelons civil servants and ministers. Several ministers were found guilty of corruption, one in each of the decades from the 1960s to the 1980s.<sup>107</sup>

The Singapore government observed that underpaid ministers and public officials had led to many ruined governments in Asia. It was also noted that some key leaders who were paid \$1000 to \$2500 a month, managed to accrue a lot of personal wealth during their tenures.<sup>108</sup> Singapore took on a pragmatic approach and chose to remunerate its ministers and civil servants using a pay scale that was derived from the private sector remuneration. Many ministers in Singapore had given up their private practice as doctors, bankers and architects to serve the country. Some had suffered an income cut of more than two-thirds in doing so. To retain the country's top talent in the government and remove the incentive for corruption, Singapore's newest practical solution was to peg the ministerial pay to two-thirds the earnings of their counterparts in the private sector, with the implied variation due to economy. Coupled with aggressive CPIB activities, it is simply not worth the civil servant's while to be corrupt.<sup>109</sup>

The preconditions for an honest government were that candidates must not need large sums of money to get elected. The political system in Singapore avoided the use of money to win elections. In 1959, voting was made compulsory and there was no incentive to use gifts or money to entice people to vote. In addition, enforcing the secrecy and collective counting of votes made it impossible for any vote buyers to be assured of their effectiveness.<sup>110</sup>

Singapore politicians observed that during the run-up to elections in many countries, there would be allegations of corruption. Almost none of these allegations were challenged in case they could not stand up to scrutiny. This lack of clarity created doubts in people's minds. Singapore politicians became very aggressive in maintaining their non-corrupt reputations. Since 1950s, it was the political climate in Singapore for politicians, both ministers and opposition members of parliament, to defend any allegations of misconduct or wrongdoing, including the use of personal suit for defamation.<sup>111</sup> Even if no personal damages were awarded, the legal cost involved made any potential accuser or defender think twice before filing suit. More importantly, the cross-examination and evidence brought light to the case and publicized the results. As a result, the public knew the truth, be it a corrupt politician or the malicious intent of an accuser exposed. Besides encouraging political fair play in rallies and speeches, the public had assurances in the reputations of their politicians and a clear perception of corruption levels in the government. These efforts at tackling corruption targeted MCP CV1.4.3, CV1.4.4, CV2.2.2 and CV2.3.1 while protecting friendly CV1.6.1, CV2.1.1, CV2.4.2, CV3.1.2 and CV3.2.1.

## **Integration**

The biggest problem in Singapore in this regard was that the first generation migrants in Singapore were not integrated into the society. Lee realized that the English speaking locals were not the economic dynamo in Singapore. It was the Chinese speaking first-generation immigrants who made up 67% of the population.<sup>112</sup> However, the Chinese educated had no role to play in society, which led to much discontent.<sup>113</sup> They created their own social networks, social system of support through clans and set up their own Chinese education system.

In 1958, Singapore changed the election laws to make voting compulsory.<sup>114</sup>

Compulsory voting precluded the MCP from threatening the population against voting for referendums that threatened the MCP. It also helped foster a sense of integration and common identity for the population because they were involved in the political process. If voting was voluntary, many people would be too caught up with their daily lives to be involved, only to voice their dissent at policies they disagreed with and lost the opportunity to influence. Compulsory voting target MCP CV1.2.2, CV1.2.3, CV1.3.3 and CV2.5.1 while protecting friendly CV3.4.1 and CV3.4.2.

The second way to integrate these Chinese was to close the Chinese schools or regulate them. It served as a two-fold effect, first to remove the MCP breeding ground and second, to integrate the Chinese population with a common education system. The Chinese population initially resisted this change because they held the Chinese culture very dear to their hearts and was worried that an English education would dilute the culture. This resistance was also encouraged by the MCP, who were worried that the English language would open a new world for the Chinese students through newspapers, films and literature, and they would find virtues in alternate political systems or discover the fallacies of communism.<sup>115</sup>

As a compromise, the Singapore government made English the first language, and students of different ethnicity were taught their own language as a second language rule, for example, Chinese for the ethnic Chinese, Malay for the ethnic Malays and Tamil for the ethnic Indians.<sup>116</sup> It also gave the government an opportunity to infuse a sense of national identity into the young population. With the innovative use of a double-session school system where schools effectively doubled their intakes by having morning and afternoon sessions, the government provided a place in school for every child within a year of election in 1959. This gave people

means to improve themselves and brighten the hopes of their future generations.<sup>117</sup> The regulation of the school system targeted MCP CV2.1.1, CV2.4.1, CV2.4.2, CV2.6.1 and CV2.6.3 while protecting friendly CV1.5.2, CV1.5.3, CV2.2.1, CV2.2.2, CV2.2.3, CV3.3.1, CV3.3.3 and CV3.4.1.

The government also reached out to integrate the general population. People's Associations were formed to provide sports, recreation and social activities. This gave people something positive to do and lined them up on the side of law and order. It was also a good way to "feel the pulse" of the people and identify social issues early.<sup>118</sup> In essence the government was using the MCP's own tactics, but outdoing the communists and winning back the ground the MCP had cultivated by investing its superior resources.<sup>119</sup> This targeted MCP CV1.2.2, CV1.4.1, CV2.1.1 and CV2.3.2 while protecting friendly CV2.3.1, CV3.3.1 and CV3.4.1.

Home ownership was also seen as a way to integrate the population into society and foster a better sense of belonging. The government of Singapore had a vision to give every citizen a stake in the country and its future, build a home owning society that had pride, felt invested and was assured with increasing stability. The Housing and Development Board, built low-cost apartments with quality amenities and offer low-interest loans to the population.<sup>120</sup> Within these housing estates, resident's committees were formed to serve 6 to 10 apartment blocks. These resident's committees fed into management committees, then into citizen's consultative committees which were networked to the prime minister office. This allowed the government to feel the ground and allow ground issues to flow up. This is Singapore's version of "upwards governance from the ground."<sup>121</sup> This targeted MCP CV2.3.2 and protected friendly CV3.1.1, CV3.1.2 and CV3.4.2.

Staunch supporters and members of the MCP who repented were also given the opportunity to integrate into the society. The most famous example was Lim Chin Joo, the younger brother of the MCP leader in Singapore, who took over as leader of the MCP in Singapore after the arrest of his brother. Given time to perceive the ruthlessness of the MCP and see the merits of democratic socialism. Lim took university degrees under detention and became a prosperous solicitor after he was released.<sup>122</sup>

## **Perception**

In Galula's view, propaganda was a one-sided weapon and only useful to the insurgents.<sup>123</sup> This was not the case in Singapore. Addressing people's perception was a powerful force multiplier for the other decisive points. The Singapore government made the effort to reach out to the population through all forms of media to expound on the truth and dispel false MCP claims, supported by tangible facts and achievements.<sup>124</sup> Throughout their political rallies, the PAP was also very careful in their speeches. They avoided the population perceiving them as stooges for the British, promoted themselves as protector of the people and listed the achievements of the government.<sup>125</sup>

In 1959, the newly elected government led by the PAP embarked on a risky information operations (IO) campaign to discredit the MCP. It released several MCP members, including the leader Lim Chin Siong, who was arrested during the 1956 crackdown by the former government. The release was on condition that they make public statements endorsing non-communist aims. The government duly arranged for full press coverage. Not only did this act draw the Chinese-speaking population's approval for the PAP not ditching former comrades, it directly targeting MCP CV1.2.1 and CV2.2.2.<sup>126</sup>

When they gained sufficient support of the people, the Singapore government became very aggressive in destroying the public perception of the MCP. When communist supporters and MCP members jeered, booed and yelled threats during the PAP rallies and speeches, the PAP openly invited them onto the stage to argue their case. When the television cameras and lights turned onto the MCP members, they refused and slipped away. It was an effective way to reduce the communists' credibility and boost the government's in front of the masses.<sup>127</sup> In September 1962, the Prime Minister of Singapore recorded a radio program to tell the story of Singapore's fight with the communists. Key MCP members were identified and invited to the radio forum to have a face-to-face confrontation on the radio. The MCP's refusal further undermined their credibility.<sup>128</sup> The IO campaign attacked MCP CV1.4.3, CV2.2.2 and CV2.3.1 while protecting friendly CV1.5.1.

Some locally published newspapers were often biased and stifled views that the editors and owners, who happened to be foreigners, did not agree with. Although the newspapers enjoyed freedom of the press, withholding or presenting one-sided views affected the stability and progress of a new nation. The government later required all newspapers published in Singapore to be locally owned. The rationale behind that decision was that criticisms from locally owned newspapers, however right or wrong, were bona fide criticisms. The reporters, publishers and owners had a stake in Singapore and had to live the policies or causes they advocated. Singapore would not allow foreigners, who did not have a stake in the country and did not have to live the consequences, to publish newspapers locally.<sup>129</sup> This measure targeted MCP CV2.6.3 and protected friendly CV1.5.2, and CV3.4.2.

## CONCLUSION

This case study was conducted to present an analysis of Singapore's counterinsurgency strategy against the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and their subversive activities, so that readers can better understand the underlying political struggle and effects of non-kinetic counterinsurgency operations. While Singapore's counterinsurgency strategy proved to be successful in this case, this template should not be applied to other counterinsurgency campaigns as the intricacies of each situation and their environments will be different.

The communist threat in Singapore was more insidious than in Malaya where the British were fighting a guerilla war with the communists. Devoid of a suitable environment to fight a guerilla war in Singapore, the MCP began a powerful subversive campaign to topple the government of Singapore. The MCP gained ground because the new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, who were a majority of the population, still identified with China and were easily swayed by the communist cause, ideals and values. Popular support of the MCP discouraged the government from cracking down on the MCP incited strikes, riots and protests to create an environment of instability. The conditions were favorable for the MCP to seize power during the elections and form a communist government.

The *Communist Cause* was the MCP's strategic center of gravity. It gave the MCP the moral strength and the will to turn Singapore into a communist country. The Chinese communist virtues of selflessness, dedication and sacrifice, exemplified by their spartan lifestyles, gave the MCP popular support in Singapore where the government was perceived to be corrupted and incompetent. The critical factor analysis showed that the communist cause in Singapore gained its strength from the population, who was disenchanted by an ineffective government who could

not meet their social needs, economic needs and aspirations. The population was staunch in their support because they were familiar with the strength of Communist China, and were not exposed to other alternate but effective forms of government.

The Singapore government, rejuvenated by young local politicians who believed in democratic socialism, understood that the communist insurgency could be neutralized by replacing the communist cause with an effective government that had tangible results to show. *Effective Governance* was Singapore's strategic center of gravity. The critical factor analysis showed that Singapore needed to provide security, develop its economy and give the population a sense of hope for the future in order to strengthen its center of gravity. At the same time, it needed to address the ineffective incumbent policies that gave the MCP its strength.

*Security, Rule of Law, Economy, Corruption, Integration and Perception* were identified as the decisive points in Singapore's counterinsurgency. The control of these decisive points allowed the government to engage the population, provide economic development, social progress and at the same time neutralize the MCP's disruption.

These decisive points were also the essential elements of nation building. Building a strong nation that was able to promise and deliver economic and social progress was the most effective way to demonstrate the competence of a government. A population that became accustomed to the comforts of wealth and security enabled by their government would not risk losing what they have by supporting insurgents. Nation building while minimizing the disruption by insurgents was a very effective strategy for counterinsurgency, as shown by this case study.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In a RAND study, Connable and Libicki found that counterinsurgencies without external help had a higher likelihood of success compared to those with direct or indirect help.<sup>130</sup> Although Singapore was under British colonial oversight, the British kept their distance and provided minimal assistance or worked discreetly behind the scene. In the midst of transition, the British took it upon themselves to implement the unpopular policies and absorbed the popular disapproval. This gave the up and coming local officials more political space.<sup>131</sup> The minimal British intervention also gave the locally-elected government of Singapore an opportunity to prove their competence to the population. However, that did not necessarily mean that the British had no interest in Singapore. Through their Special Service intelligence agency and colonial representatives, the British kept a close watch on the situation. They had the means to conduct kinetic operations and remove the MCP by force if required, however unpopular it might be.

This research was conducted without sources that provided insights from the British point of view. Future researchers could attempt to source for British documents, official notes and communications between the colonial government in Singapore and Britain. This would help researchers understand the British assessment of the situation and their considerations behind their non-involvement or the trigger point beyond which they would intervene.

While this paper provides a better understanding of the non-kinetic but more effective aspects of counterinsurgency or FID, the recommended future research would help governments like the US and its coalition partners reconsider the levels of involvement and use of their resources in FID operations.

### Notes

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- <sup>7</sup> Ibid, p 43
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- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Galula, p 25
- <sup>22</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, pp 87, 207
- <sup>23</sup> Van der Kroef, p 20.
- <sup>24</sup> Willis, p 1.
- <sup>25</sup> Stubbs, pp 5-6.
- <sup>26</sup> Van der Kroef, p 2.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid, p 33.
- <sup>28</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, p 203.
- <sup>29</sup> Van der Kroef, p 36.
- <sup>30</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, p 167
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid, p 331.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid, pp 199-200.
- <sup>33</sup> Van der Kroef, p 36.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid, p 37.
- <sup>35</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, p 210.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid, pp 166-168.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp 244-247.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid, p 203.
- <sup>39</sup> Stubbs, p 244.
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- <sup>70</sup> Ibid, p 450.
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- <sup>72</sup> Lee, *From Third World to First*, pp 109-110.
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- <sup>105</sup> Ibid, p 158.
- <sup>106</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, pp 346, 479.
- <sup>107</sup> Lee, *From Third World to First*, p 160.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid, pp167, 160.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid, pp 168-170.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid, pp 164-165.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid, p 130.
- <sup>112</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, pp 142, 86.
- <sup>113</sup> Ibid, p 167.
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid, p 279.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid, p 221.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid, pp 214, 216.
- <sup>117</sup> Ibid, p 327.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid, p 324.
- <sup>119</sup> Lee, *From Third World to First*, p 122.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid, p 96.
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid, pp 122-123.
- <sup>122</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, p 474.
- <sup>123</sup> Galula, p 9.
- <sup>124</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, pp 397-399
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid, p 229.
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid, pp 263, 307.
- <sup>127</sup> Ibid, pp 486-487.
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid, pp 397-399.
- <sup>129</sup> Ibid, p 298-299.
- <sup>130</sup> Connable and Libicki, pg 49-51
- <sup>131</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, pp 258-259.

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## APPENDIX A

Table A-1. Critical Factors Analysis of the MCP's strategic COG

<b>COG of MCP : Communist Cause (Strategic)</b>		
	<b>CC1:</b> Ability to convince the MCP leadership that a communist system of government in Singapore was worth pursuing.	
	<b>CR1.1:</b> MCP leaders have the capability and political aptitude to negotiate the political arena	
	<b>CV1.1.1:</b> the English bureaucracy	
	<b>CV1.1.2:</b> the open dialogue and debate	
	<b>CV1.1.3:</b> the MCP leaders	
	<b>CR1.2:</b> MCP leaders' perception of support from fellow MCP members and majority of population.	
	<b>CV1.2.1:</b> the MCP members' perception	
	<b>CV1.2.2:</b> suppressed personal interests and needs	
	<b>CV1.2.3:</b> suppressed Chinese organizations' and clans' interests and needs	
	<b>CR1.3:</b> Government tolerates MCP activities	
	<b>CV1.3.1:</b> population receptive of MCP activities	
	<b>CV1.3.2:</b> MCP methods for mass persuasion leveraged violence	
	<b>CV1.3.3:</b> suppressed MCP non-supporters	
	<b>CV1.3.4:</b> weak judicial system	
	<b>CR1.4:</b> Weak governing authority (actual and/or perception)	
	<b>CV1.4.1:</b> MCP inferior resources	
	<b>CV1.4.2:</b> MCP mass persuasion activities	
	<b>CV1.4.3:</b> political speeches	
	<b>CV1.4.4:</b> MCP IO activities	
	<b>CC2:</b> Ability to persuade the Chinese population to support the insurgents	
	<b>CR2.1:</b> Emotional attachment and sense of pride in Communist China	
	<b>CV2.1.1:</b> emotional detachment from Singapore	
	<b>CV2.1.2:</b> lack of tangible investments in Singapore	
	<b>CR2.2:</b> Promise of a better future and livelihood under the communists	
	<b>CV2.2.1:</b> untested ability to govern	
	<b>CV2.2.2:</b> the communist political platform	
	<b>CV2.2.3:</b> MCP disruption of economy through mob activities	
	<b>CR2.3:</b> Perceived weakness of the Singapore government	

		<b>CV2.3.1:</b> well-thought political platform of ruling party
		<b>CV2.3.2:</b> ability to deliver tangible reforms like low-cost housing, schools and success in attracting foreign investors
		<b>CR2.4:</b> Chinese population shielded from external cultural and societal influence
		<b>CV2.4.1:</b> the Chinese school system
		<b>CV2.4.2:</b> the media
		<b>CV2.4.3:</b> social networks
		<b>CR2.5:</b> Chinese organizations' perception of peer / communal support
		<b>CV2.5.1:</b> varying priorities and interests of each union, clan or organization
		<b>CR2.6:</b> Effective conduits for the transmission of communist cause
		<b>CV2.6.1:</b> registration of organizations required by law
		<b>CV2.6.2:</b> the MCP leaders
		<b>CV2.6.3:</b> the Chinese media



Table A-2. Critical Factors Analysis of Singapore's strategic COG

<b>COG of Singapore : Effective Governance (Strategic)</b>		
	<b>CC1:</b> Ability to provide adequate security	
	<b>CR1.1:</b> Effective police force	
	<b>CV1.1.1:</b> ethnic mix of police force	
	<b>CV1.1.2:</b> sympathy for same ethnicity	
	<b>CR1.2:</b> Rule-of-law upheld	
	<b>CV1.2.1:</b> Asian juries' aversion to convict (cultural superstition)	
	<b>CV1.2.2:</b> people's aversion for involvement (witnesses fear retribution)	
	<b>CR1.3:</b> Effective intelligence agency	
	<b>CV1.3.1:</b> people's aversion for involvement (informants fear retribution)	
	<b>CV1.3.2:</b> lack of expertise after British withdrawal	
	<b>CR1.4:</b> Effective Armed Forces	
	<b>CV1.4.1:</b> reliance on British, Malayan forces	
	<b>CV1.4.2:</b> lack of experienced trainers	
	<b>CV1.4.3:</b> military hardware	
	<b>CR1.5:</b> Popular perception of security	
	<b>CV1.5.1:</b> MCP propaganda	
	<b>CV1.5.2:</b> Chinese media	
	<b>CV1.5.3:</b> activities of Chinese organizations, unions and students	
	<b>CR1.6:</b> Sufficient funds for security initiatives	
	<b>CV1.6.1</b> corruption	
	<b>CV1.6.2</b> lack of resources	
	<b>CC2:</b> Ability to generate revenue and stimulate economic progress	
	<b>CR2.1:</b> Suitable infrastructure support	
	<b>CV2.1.1:</b> infrastructure maintainers disenchanted with remuneration	
	<b>CR2.2:</b> Educated workforce	
	<b>CV2.2.1:</b> disconnect between education and economic demands	
	<b>CV2.2.2:</b> unregulated Chinese education system	
	<b>CV2.2.3:</b> social biases	
	<b>CR2.3:</b> Social harmony and peace	
	<b>CV2.3.1:</b> ethnic divide and friction	
	<b>CV2.3.2:</b> disenchanted workers	

		<b>CV2.3.3:</b> large organizations, clans and unions
		<b>CR2.4:</b> Foreign companies perceive Singapore as a viable investment
		<b>CV2.4.1:</b> industrial unrest
		<b>CV2.4.2:</b> corruption
		<b>CV2.4.3:</b> internal and external security
		<b>CV2.4.3:</b> tax policies and financial bureaucracy
		<b>CR2.5:</b> Suitable market for Singapore products and services
		<b>CV2.5.1:</b> international recognition
		<b>CV2.5.2:</b> spending power of locals
		<b>CC3:</b> Ability to generate social progress and provide a sense of social well-being
		<b>CR3.1:</b> People's basic needs are met
		<b>CV3.1.1:</b> scarcity of land for housing
		<b>CV3.1.2:</b> increasing population and the strain on services
		<b>CR3.2:</b> Sufficient funds for basic services and social initiatives
		<b>CV3.2.1:</b> corruption
		<b>CR3.3:</b> Perception of ethnic, social integration and engagement
		<b>CV3.3.1:</b> inherent ethnic affinity
		<b>CV3.3.2:</b> differing political interest in the different ethnic groups
		<b>CV3.3.3:</b> media
		<b>CR3.4:</b> Population's sense of belonging
		<b>CV3.4.1:</b> unique Singapore identity
		<b>CV3.4.2:</b> individual investment and social security